

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

All THE YEAR ROUND

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AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"I'VE told you all I can remember of the dear boy—you shall see any subsequent accounts that may come to me from Rutland Bay detailing his illness," said the Rev. Joshua Parker, addressing Sir Peter. "He was always fragile and delicate—that picture, though a little roughly done, is as like him as could be."

The Rev. Joshua Parker had followed his letter to the Castle within twenty-four hours, and now sat narrating to Sir Peter the story of Gervase Critchett's brief life.

The minister's tall, thin figure presented a striking contrast to Sir Peter's short, stout one. He had large features and solemn, grey eyes. There was one point of resemblance between the two men—a bald patch on the top of the head in the region of the organ of benevolence, which suggested the idea that the excessive use of that organ had destroyed the roots of the hair.

Sir Peter took up the roughly-executed photograph once more. It was that of a boy of a Greek type of beauty, with large, dreamy eyes, and an abundance of curly hair.

"Poor Gervase!" he sighed. "The image of his father! He would have brought back my young days to me!" And then he sighed again.

The minister sighed too. "It is a mysterious dispensation of Providence; a grievous blow to you, Sir Peter, no doubt, and to me also. When I passed this way a month ago and looked up at your Castle, high among the Fells, I said to myself, 'I

shall soon be bringing glad tidings to the master of that house, and lo! instead—'" he broke off abruptly. There could be no doubt as to the strength of the bond which had existed between him and the orphan boy.

"You passed this way a month ago?" queried Sir Peter, feeling the necessity of a brief respite from the sad subject. Then, as the recollection of Madge's pitiful confession of a second abstracted letter crossed his mind, he added, hurriedly: "Ah, yes! yes, I remember; it must have been just about the time of my birthday festivities."

"It was just after, Sir Peter. I arrived at Liverpool, on my way to Upton, on the morning of the twenty-second. I remember, during the ensuing week, reading an account of your birthday festivities in a Cumberland paper."

"Ah, you should have been here and taken part in them; we kept things going merrily for nearly a week."

"I should have been at Upton during that week had not my plans been entirely changed by an extraordinary occurrence."

"An extraordinary occurrence!" repeated Sir Peter, all eager curiosity in a moment.

But instead of attempting to satisfy that curiosity, Mr. Parker leaned forward in his chair, fixed his solemn eyes full upon Sir Peter, and said, sententiously:

"Once I was a gardener's boy!"

Sir Peter jumped to his feet with a spring, and laid his hand on the minister's shoulder. "Ah," he said, delightedly, "and some benevolent person rescued you from that position, educated you, and sent you forth to teach and to preach?"

Mr. Parker shook his head. "Not a bit of it; I have only myself to thank for the choice of a calling with which I am thoroughly in harmony."

Sir Peter walked away to the window.

Mr. Parker's next words brought him back at a run. They were:

"Have you ever studied the theory of transplanting, Sir Peter?"

"Transplanting, transplanting!" repeated Sir Peter, "that's one of the many things I have not yet, through pressure of occupation, been able to give a thought to."

As he said this, it flashed into the old gentleman's mind that the "theory of transplanting," as propounded by the Rev. Joshua Parker, might be a thoroughly congenial one; and instantly there rose up before him a vision of backgrounds of shrubs, and foregrounds of flowers, removed from one corner of the Castle grounds to another, and, if they didn't do there, to somewhere else.

"People frequently," the minister continued, "carry out the principles of an art without giving much thought to them. I in my young days not only carried out the principles of the art of transplanting, but thought about them and built a theory on them."

"Ah, an ingenious, thoughtful lad!" said Sir Peter, thinking what a protégé this gardener's boy would have made.

"One of the wisest of our statesmen made a noteworthy remark about the uselessness of 'matter in its wrong place.' I never saw a shrub or flower that needed sunshine pining in the shade, or vice versa, without thinking of it. The thing that in its right place would have been a joy and a beauty, and so have played the part it was meant to play in the scheme of creation, was, in its wrong place, simply so much inert useless matter."

"Ah," murmured Sir Peter, "I'll get you to make the round of my flower-garden while you're here. You might make a few suggestions."

The minister went on.

"After a time my eye, trained to detect matter in its wrong place, wandered from plants to the men and women about me. As with the plants, so I found it with my fellow-creatures; and I came to the conclusion that half the sins and the miseries of the human race arose from the fact of people being planted amid unsuitable surroundings."

"And you tried your hand at transplanting men and women," cried Sir Peter, excitedly, now thoroughly convinced that the subject was a congenial one.

"I did my best, Sir Peter, but that was

little enough. My eye, trained to detect want of harmony between person and place, suggested more work than my feeble hands could accomplish. In fact, to have accomplished one quarter of it, I must have played the part of Providence to the community generally."

"And a very good part to play, too, my dear sir," said Sir Peter, sympathetically.

"But so much beyond my capabilities," replied the minister, "that, after I adopted my sacred calling, I was almost driven to regret the power my eye had acquired of detecting matter in its wrong place. I was perpetually tormented with a desire to set things straight." Sir Peter's face here became aglow. "There were peers of the realm I should like to have transplanted from their grand houses to costermongers' cellars, and there were hewers of wood and drawers of water whom I would have made peers of the realm. It was this sense of the fitness of things that made me say, so soon as I set eyes on Gervase Critchett: 'That boy is out of place among working men.' And on the very evening that I was starting for Upton—what's the matter, my dear sir; do you suffer from cramp?"

"A trifle now and then," said Sir Peter, giving one or two vigorous stamps. "I've been sitting still a good bit this morning—ever since I've been listening to you. How would it be to take a turn outside on the terrace? The wind has lulled a bit. After all, it's only a sou-wester."

Only a sou-wester! But that sou-wester had done its work well during the night, as the stripped trees and battered flower-beds in the garden testified. The damaged sea-wall also below Saint Cuthbert's Church had a tale to tell of the combined fury of wind and wave, and the fishing-boats, drawn up high on the beach, showed that the weather-wise fishermen knew well enough that that fury was as yet but half spent.

Just now, however, as Sir Peter had said, the sou-wester was taking a rest, and the terrace, under a fitful noon-day sun, looked a fairly-tempting promenade.

Mr. Parker made a brief exclamation as to the wind-swept clearness and beauty of the surrounding landscape.

"You were saying an unusual occurrence took place at Liverpool," said Sir Peter, eager as a child to get the finish of what promised to be an interesting story.

"Ah, yes! I was saying that just as I had detected the want of harmony between

Gervase Critchett and his surroundings, so did I, on the night of my arrival at Liverpool, detect the incongruity of another person—this time a young woman—with her surroundings."

"Ah, a young woman!"

"I had been spending the evening with a brother minister, and, as I was going back rather late to my hotel, I met a policeman with a young woman in his charge. Now there are some people who look in their right place on their road to a police-station in charge of the police, and one is delighted to leave them to the surroundings that so admirably become them. But a single glance into this young woman's face showed me that whatever might be her right place, assuredly it was not within the walls of a prison."

"Ah! Good-looking girl, eh?"

"It was not her good looks, but the utter forlornness and hopelessness that at first attracted me. I caught sight of her face beneath a gas-lamp—it was haggard, death-like in its pallor; a quantity of jet-black hair hung about it. She was dressed entirely in long, limp, grey garments. I could have fancied some poor soul, bidden against its will to come forth from the tomb, looking much as she looked."

Sir Peter stopped abruptly in his walk.

"Forlorn-looking, pallid, with jet-black hair," he repeated, thoughtfully. "Dressed all in grey too, and on the night after my birthday."

All Lance's ugly suspicions of Stubbs's double dealing at Liverpool seemed suddenly to have substance given to them.

On some one else's ear beside Sir Peter's the minister's narrative had fallen with startling effect. Madge, wrapped in her furs, was standing in the parapet-balcony where once Miss Shore had knelt, addressing her piteous prayer for mercy to the starlit heavens. Preparations for the journey to Spain were now complete, and on that very afternoon, Madge, accompanied only by her maid, intended to set forth. She was standing now in that balcony of painful memories, looking her farewell to the beautiful landscape tricked by the fitful sunshine into a transient semblance of a summer smile.

"Good-bye, you dear lanes, where Lance and I have had so many canters together! Good-bye, dear stream, where we used to fish and boat through the summer mornings! Good-bye, dear woods; good-bye, dear hills," she was saying to herself.

Spain, it is true, might own to landscapes

far more magnificent than this; but only between the bars of a convent window would she catch glimpses of them, and—this it was that would take the colour and glory out of them all—there would be nothing of Lance in them.

Thus her thoughts ran, when suddenly the minister's story, summed up by Sir Peter, reached her ears, and forthwith the landscape became a blank to her, and her heart seemed to stand still, as she leaned over the parapet above the speakers in intense painful eagerness to catch what was to follow.

Sir Peter was eager for the sequel also. "What was she charged with, tell me—you did not let her go to prison?" he asked.

"I put the first of your questions to a man—a dock labourer, who followed them," answered Mr. Parker. "He told me that she had made a most determined attempt to commit suicide from the deck of a steamer under repair in one of the docks, and that it was only by the merest chance that the attempt had been frustrated. He had remained behind on this steamer till late in the evening, in order to finish some work, and by main force had held the girl back from her attempt to jump over its side into the basin—"

There came a low, startled cry from the balcony at this moment; and, before Sir Peter had time to realise who it was that stood there, Madge was beside him with clasped hands praying for the finish of the story. "She is alive, only tell me that," she prayed, with blanched cheeks and quivering lips.

Mr. Parker looked astonished. "Did you know her—Etelka McIvor?" he asked. "She said that she had not a friend in the world."

"She is alive, only tell me that!" implored Madge.

"Yes, she is alive and in safe keeping. I attended the next day at the police-court when she was charged with the attempt at suicide. No friends came forward to claim her, so I made myself known to the magistrate and volunteered to charge myself with her safe keeping."

Madge leaned against the stone balustrade of the terrace. This sudden reprieve from the sentence of her condemning conscience was almost more than she could bear.

Stubbs's story then, from beginning to end, was a fabrication! The chances were that the man or his confederate had traced the girl to Liverpool, and had there lost

sight of her. With an eye to a comfortable provision for himself in the future, and taking it for granted that Jane Shore would never again make her appearance at Upton, he had then fabricated what seemed to him a fitting end to the tragic story, and one most likely to bring about the fulfilment of Madge's wishes—a necessary condition this in order to the bringing about of the aforesaid comfortable provision for himself.

The insertion of the false statement in the Liverpool newspaper would be a matter of easy accomplishment to him, for the double reason that such sad stories were of daily occurrence in the place, and that his former connection with the Liverpool Press made ways and means ready to his hand.

All this in quick succession passing through Madge's brain, and coming hand in hand with her sudden revulsion of feeling, for the moment deprived her of the power of speech.

It was not so with Sir Peter; his ready exclamations and questions flowed in a stream.

"My dear sir, this is good news—I've not had better for many a day past! Lance will be overjoyed—"

Here he broke off, and looked at Madge.

"But you found a home for her, of course?" he went on, cheerily, after a moment. "Now tell us everything that happened—all you found out about her from beginning to end."

"Yes, I found a home for her. I took her first of all to the wife of the Wesleyan minister whom I knew intimately in Liverpool. A worthy woman she was, with eleven small children, and neither nurse nor maid-servant in the house. Now here there will be plenty of occupation, I thought, for the young lady. If she has a kind heart, and is grateful for her rescue from death, she will set to work with a will to help this poor Christian mother with her many burthens."

Sir Peter fumbled in his pocket, and presently produced from a letter-case an indelible pencil and a telegraph-form, two things, it may be remarked, which went as regularly into his pocket every morning as his purse or pocket-handkerchief.

"If you'll give me the address of that worthy woman, I think I'll send Miss Shore—ah, Miss McIvor, I mean—a few words of—of congratulation on—"

"She is not there now," interrupted Mr. Parker; "and if you'll allow me to make

the suggestion, she is not in the frame of mind at the present moment to appreciate congratulations, however kindly intentioned they may be."

Sir Peter looked disappointed as he put away his pencil; then a bright idea came to him, and he took it out again and began scribbling on his telegraph-form, making a writing-pad of his letter-case.

"Lance will be glad to know," he muttered half to himself.

Madge thought her ears must have played her false.

"Lance is on the Mediterranean?" she exclaimed.

"No, no, my dear; at Liverpool. Ah, you didn't know—there, I've let it out—it doesn't much matter. He altered his mind, I'm glad to say—came back from Marseilles, and is now at Liverpool investigating—ah well, investigating—something!"

Madge needed no further telling. In a flash of thought she pictured Lance at his dreary work at Liverpool—searching grave records perhaps, hearing a hundred sad stories in order to prove one false. She pictured the rush of joy which Sir Peter's telegram would bring to him at his hopeless task.

"Let me send it," she pleaded, laying her hand on the old gentleman's arm. "I should like it to go signed with my name."

It seemed to her that the one who had so nearly wrecked the man's happiness for him, might well be the one to send to him the glad tidings that her endeavours had been futile as well as misguided. Her message was a brief one:

"She is not dead. Come back at once.
MADGE."

FIREWORKS.

EVEN if there were no autumnal fogs in the air, and no signs of coming winter, there would be no danger of forgetting the approach of November. A whole month beforehand there begins a scattered fusillade of squibs and crackers, which increases in volume and intensity as the famous Fifth approaches. And what more evidence do we want of the tenacity with which the boy of the period clings to the favourite festival of those other boys, his predecessors, who have handed down to him the tradition of Guy Fawkes's Day, and of his resolve in turn to transmit these traditions unimpaired to future generations? Not that the love of the bright coruscations

and thundering bangs of our favourite fireworks is confined to boys. Their sisters watch the display, ensconced behind the window curtains, with equal delight, and the elder members of the family are just as much interested as the rest.

With the preliminary detonations of the approaching festival sounding in the ears, the question of " whence come the enormous supplies of fireworks that still hardly keep pace with the demand, and how are they made ? " seemed to invite solution ; and thus a fine, sunny morning, of what it was happily, in the present instance, a libel to call chill October, found us on the way to pay a visit to the establishment of one of the great masters of the pyrotechnic art.

The pleasant heights of Norwood and Gipsy Hill look down upon us ; the Crystal Palace gleams proudly from its commanding eminence ; and all about are new streets, new villas, new rows of shops contending for possession of the soil with fields and hedgerows. Had we come this way but yesterday we should have been in the midst of a stream of eager sportsmen bound for Croydon Racecourse ; but to-day the tranquillity is profound. The men and youths are all gone to their daily employment ; the children are at school ; the wives and maids are busy about household matters. There is hardly a soul stirring upon the street, who can be asked to point out the way.

But the factory is close at hand after all—a side street leads up to a continuous wooden paling, too high to be peeped over by the curious ; and in the paling there is a wicket-gate defended by sundry warning notices as to penalties incurred by trespassers, and a friendly admonition to " Beware of the Dog." The dog is not a myth, we can hear him bark, and his voice proclaims him a big one.

It will have been evident to the most careless observer—taking into consideration the locality and the nearness of the Crystal Palace—that the works in question can belong to none but the famous pyrotechnists, Messrs. Brock and Co., and a board upon the gateway confirms the fact. There is nothing obtrusive about a firework factory ; but we may find that there is " that within that passeth show."

The first preliminary is to be seated by a blazing fire in the counting-house, where a number of clerks are calling over invoices and posting ledgers ; and the next step is into the private office of the heads of the firm, where the representative of seven

generations of skilful and successful pyrotechnists sits in his arm-chair with an array of telephone disks before him, and regulates the march of his *corps d'armée*.

The great works of the year are over, indeed—the fêtes and displays, where figure immense views and set pieces all to be writ in flame, with gigantic wheels, rockets, shells, fire clouds and golden-rain all performing their functions ; but the work of preparation is always going on ; and now the day of small things has come, and the different branches of the works are actively at work in supplying the demand for the all-important festival of the Fifth.

Another establishment at Haroldswood, near Romford, is exclusively occupied in the manufacture of these minor fireworks, the demand for which goes on continually increasing. The more boys, the more fireworks ; and there seems to be no limit to the supply of either.

And now, under the guidance of the courteous manager of the works, we start on our journey of exploration. The big dog, who proves to be a fine St. Bernard, wags his tail in a pacific manner—if not like St. Ninian, "friendly to strangers," he has no antipathy to persons properly introduced. If there are no architectural beauties about the firework manufactory, the aspect of things is nevertheless singular and surprising. Here stretches a prairie as far as the eye can reach, a level meadow, some seventy acres in extent, dotted over with low buildings and sheds, all connected by narrow tracks formed of a single plank, with a tramway meandering here and there ; and overhead wires establishing telephonic connection with the different buildings. Each shed is separated by a space of at least twenty yards from any of its neighbours, and the magazines, where the more explosive mixtures are stored, are visible only as grassy hillocks ; their contents being stored underground out of the reach of casual conflagrations.

Although a place of busy industry, it is surprising what a stillness reigns over the scene. No voices are heard ; no clang and clatter of machinery. There is a gentle hum from the engine-house, but that is only audible in its immediate neighbourhood. And although there are several hundreds of people at work in the various buildings, there are not more than three or four together anywhere. Each little hut carries a board at the entrance setting forth the maximum weight of combustibles allowed within it, and the number of workers who

may be employed there. In the sheds where the more dangerous operations are carried on, only one man, perhaps, is allowed to work. All this isolation may induce taciturnity on the part of the employés, but it does not seem to affect their spirits, for everybody looks rather cheerful and "chirpy" than otherwise.

But to begin with, there are processes which involve not an atom of danger, and where the elaborate precautions, necessary in other parts of the works, can be dispensed with. There is paper, for instance, which, apart from its connection with pens and ink, cannot be considered a dangerous material, and paper in one form or another forms the outer covering of almost every description of firework. And in the paper-room we have every description of material, from the thinnest and toughest, to the heaviest; from tissue-paper to mill-board. Here also are a machine and an operator cutting up ream after ream into the proper sizes; it may be for cases for halfpenny squibs, or for half-a-crown rockets; but, anyhow, there are as many kinds of paper cases as there are of fireworks. The most imposing in appearance of these cases are designed for a firework known as Jack-in-the-box, and are formed of many folds of thick mill-board, and of a capacity to hold a perfect magazine of crackers. Mortars, also, are made of paper; mortars for discharging those shells which burst in the air and frizzle into a thousand jets of flame—not that these paper mortars are used in the grand displays, but iron ones, of which we shall say more anon.

Another building contains the paper-case makers, busy with paste and cores of various sizes in wood and brass; and this business of making and rolling the cases employs a number of female hands—hands which work with such skill and dexterity that squib cases, with their coloured trimmings—so attractive to the eye of youth—spring into existence as it were with a touch.

A rocket must have its case; but what would it be without its stick? And in the making of rocket-sticks, there is here a considerable industry. Here is the carpenter's shop piled with baulks of timber that have been cut into convenient planks, and a circular saw is at work, cutting these planks into strips of the exact size and weight required. In other days the rocket was attached to its stick with string, and would sometimes burst from its ligatures, and leave its tail behind it; the stick being to the rocket what its tail is to the bird,

and deprived of it the projectile becomes erratic, waltzing round and round and probably clearing the decks of its admirers. Under the present system, a hollow paper case forms part of the rocket, and the end of the stick, having been first placed in a revolving cutter, which rounds it to the exact size, is fitted into the case and secured by a transverse pin which holds everything tight.

Above the carpenter's shop is the lathe-room, where turners are at work turning the centre of wheels, and this part of the establishment looks like a toyshop with hundreds of cart-wheels and curious devices in turnery ware; but all are for the service of the Fire King, to take their places in some set-piece, where maroons, and gerbs, and tourbillons chase each other in fantastic fiery circles. Then there is the making of pill-boxes, thousands of pill-boxes, to be afterwards filled not with nauseous doctor's stuff, but with the composition of those brilliant coloured fires, which are destined to make our back gardens glow like bowers of Eden in the midst of November gloom.

And now we are under the arched roof of the great storehouse, where are stacked a host of appliances for the grand school of pyrotechny—the great latticed-frames on which are set up the outlines of the fiery pictures, such as are shown weekly during the season at the Crystal Palace, outlines that are traced out in strips of cane, which support the cases of various coloured fires.

And here is the studio of the artist of the establishment, the designer of the great pieces of the battles, sieges, triumphs; of the fire fountains and revolving stars; of the flowers that as they fade blossom again in still more glowing form. A snug room is the artist's, where he is at work with his coadjutor, where the walls are hung with old prints of the great firework displays of old times; such as that given at the Peace of Ryswick, or the still more famous display at the wedding of Louis the Sixteenth and Marie Antoinette, which ended in a great panic and loss of life, as Dumas describes it, a true if evil presage of the future of the Royal pair. Then there was a great display in Saint James's Park in the middle of last century, and others of more recent date—the "peace" fireworks of 1856, for instance—are they not to be found reproduced in those big volumes of the "Illustrated" and "Graphic," that adorn the shelves of the studio? And among these will be found

many great displays, given by the firm we are visiting in India, at the Prince of Wales's visit, and again at the proclamation of the Queen as Empress; a fine display at Philadelphia Centennial, in 1876; and many others.

Since 1865, there have been the summer displays at the Crystal Palace; and two of the finest shows of recent times were given by Messrs. Brock at Lisbon, the first on the marriage of the Crown Prince, when the whole Portuguese Fleet was illuminated by the firm, when the Tagus was all ablaze with light, and the shores and skies seemed filled with sparkling fires. The success of this fête led to another order for five thousand pounds worth of fireworks—a large order this—to celebrate the visit of the King of Sweden to Lisbon.

And this brings us to the great mortar which was made for this Lisbon fête, a mortar of steel banded with wrought iron, which carries a shell twenty-five inches in diameter. The mortar is slung upright on wheels, and was driven over London Bridge on its way to the docks, a man standing inside and driving the team. It attracted considerable attention, as might be guessed, as one of the queerest vehicles that ever crossed the bridge. This mortar has never been fired at a public fête in England—the Crystal Palace people are afraid for their glass, for the contents of the enormous shell—it carries, with a charge of three pounds of powder, to a height of some three hundred feet—spreads over nearly an acre of sky space. It was fired experimentally not long ago on Croydon Racecourse in the daytime, and the effect was most curious. The cloud of gerbs whistling about in the air, shut out the light of day.

Like some hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.

Birds flew hither and thither in terror, and a hare leapt from her form and ran blindly to and fro. But at night! Well, when the big mortar is discharged at night with its twenty-five inch shell, may we be there to see!

Then there is a whole park of artillery of a smaller calibre, stacked about the place. Indeed, we are told that the whole available "siege train" numbers some eleven hundred guns of different calibres—none of them adapted, however, for human slaughter, but destined to enliven mankind with brilliant, harmless "feux de joie!"

Proceeding on our way, we are led

further into the labyrinth of wooden track-ways, leading to the carefully-isolated sheds, where operations classed as dangerous are carried on. The danger is one of degree; for it may be said of most of the firework compositions, that, although highly inflammable, they are not violently explosive. Gunpowder, indeed, is but sparingly used, both for the indispensable bangs, and also for impelling and scattering charges of more choice combustibles. Thus the danger is rather of rapid conflagration than explosion; and from the small quantities of explosives allowed in each workshop, when fires occur, as they will sometimes, their effects are limited to one small area, and they rarely result in serious damage to person or property. Still, mixing fireworks is not exactly like mixing puddings; and the precautions enforced by the Government, as well as those insisted on by the firm, are very detailed and strict.

Here is a hut, where three young women are loading squibs, with a tray of composition before them. They wear a sort of uniform of blue serge, which is really very pretty and becoming. Pockets are not allowed for either sex: they might contain matches and pipes in one case, or scissors and needles in the other. Anything of iron or steel is rigorously tabooed. The wooden pathways are swept clear of grit. The workshops are lined with varnished wood, fastened with copper nails. Dust and cobwebs are strictly banished. The precautions against fire are simple, and yet effective. Outside every hut stand as many fire-buckets as there are workpeople employed within. On the alarm of fire every one seizes his or her bucket and hurries to the scene. The fire is sure to be sharp, but short, and, by the time a hose could be got into play, the necessity for it would have ceased.

Altogether there are some hundred of these little buildings scattered about—like some settlement in the backwoods—all provided with double swing-doors, which are carefully padlocked when the workpeople leave. Here is one where a man works alone, engaged in mixing composition which he rubs with a brush through a sieve of copper wire. Then there are men banging away with wooden mallets on copper ramrods, loading rockets, perhaps, or Roman candles. And here are magazines, with trays of composition just come from the drying-shed, stars for rockets, cut up in little cubes, like sweet-

meats, coloured fires of all kinds, and the materials for the beautiful golden-rain. The fine downpours of golden-rain at the Crystal Palace, by the way, cover a space, we are told, five hundred feet wide, and a hundred feet high.

But as far as numbers go, the making of squibs carries the day. How many huts are occupied by the patient girls in blue we should be afraid to say, but wherever we go they are hard at work, filling, "choking," "dubbing," "bouncing." As fast as these are finished, they are collected, tied in dozens, and stored away in the magazines. As fast as one magazine receives its complement, another is opened. And then there are the service magazines, where the fireworks of all kinds are collected. Here, besides the more familiar sorts, we have "Mines of Serpents," "Italian Streamers," "Chinese Flyers," "Golden Pots," "Jewel Fountains," and "Wheels" of every description arranged according to the requirements of the myriad dealers, who, as the "Fifth" approaches, become more and more clamorous for supplies. Behind these again is the British boy who has been saving up his pocket-money for weeks, perhaps investing it in a firework club, and who in a few weeks' time will contemplate, with a kind of proud regret, the spent and exploded cases as they lie strewn about lawns and garden-paths, about courts and alleys, and over wide ranges of the damp and silent fields.

We wrote British boy; but it would be more correct to say English, for the Scotch scarcely celebrate Guy Fawkes Day at all. They expand a little into fireworks on New Year's Day. But the Scotch boy is not for squibs like his brother over the border. Perhaps he has not so much pocket-money. Perhaps he has an inborn distaste to the "banging" of "saxpences." Nor has the fifth of November celebration taken much root in the colonies. English settlers may burn their powder as usual, but it is more in memory of the old country than of Guy Fawkes. And, indeed, on every side the old memory of the celebration has died away, and is nothing but a jolly youthful fête which anybody might join in. Here is the Guy Fawkes of to-day, as we see him in the bright hand-bills of the firework shops, no longer a fierce conspirator, but a gay and jovial scarecrow, his peaked hat stuck full of rockets and pin wheels, bunches of squibs stick out of his coat-sleeves, and, with his dark lanthorn and his lighted match, he

sits doubled up alongside a barrel of gunpowder, while the straw of his stuffing oozes out of his dilapidated navvy boots.

And now we have seen almost all there is to be seen in the firework factory, except the laboratory, and that is only opened when experiments are actually going on. But, stay; there is another important branch of the business of a more utilitarian character. This is the manufacture of signal rockets, and other lights for the mercantile marine. The rockets are made of great power, and they are provided with a self-lighting apparatus, which renders the shipmaster independent of any match, or extraneous source of fire. There is also a capital flare for use in fishing-boats, chiefly trawlers, both for signalling and to give warning of their whereabouts to approaching vessels; and this has a safe and ingenious plan of self-lighting, which is the subject of a patent.

Altogether, as the result of our visit, it is pleasant to find that in matters pyrotechnic, England holds her own, and something more than her own; for foreign showmen are often obliged to have resort to our English pyrotechnists when native resources are insufficient for fêtes on a large scale. From India come orders from the great Rajahs; from Australia, from public bodies, and the rich generally; and, indeed, there is a branch of this firm established in Melbourne to supply the demand. And the continent of Europe in general is often a customer for English fireworks. China, indeed, sends us fireworks; but only those absurd little crackers, valued mainly for their cheapness, which come over at the firework season. We have just seen a case of them, packed in quaint boxes like tea-cases. But in every other way the Chinese, in spite of their thousands of years of experience, have nothing to teach us, but everything to learn.

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE.

"MORE skilful in all points of navigation than any that ever was before his time, in his time, or since his death; of a perfect memory, very great observation, eloquent by nature, skilful in artillery, expert and apt to let blood and give physics unto his people according to the climate. He was of low stature, strong limbs, broad-chested, round-headed, brown hair, full-bearded; his eyes large, and round, and clear; well-favoured, fair, and of a cheerful countenance."

Thus Stow described him. "A man fearful to the King of Spain"; a "lyme of the devil," as the Spaniards themselves called him; but to the English, the champion of their country and religion; a man true to his word, merciful to those under him, but brooking no liberties, and hating nothing so much as idleness.

Of the several conflicting accounts of his birthplace, parentage, and early life, we give the most probable and most widely-accepted, without mention of the others. Drake, then, was born, 1540, of a Devonshire family, connected with the Drakes of Ash, whose crest, an eagle displayed, Drake wore in preference to the one conferred on him by the Queen. Robert, his father, was probably brother to one John Drake of Exmouth, a merchant distinguished for his energy and success.

In his preface to "Drake Revived" (1626), Sir Francis Drake, Bart., nephew to the great seaman, tells us that the father was forced, whether on account of religious persecution is doubtful, to fly from Devonshire to Kent, "there to inhabit in the hull of a ship, wherein many of his younger sons were born. He had twelve in all." These sons did not belie their name, but took quite naturally to the water, and most of them died at sea.

At an early age, Drake was apprenticed to the master of a small lugger; and so diligent and dutiful was he that the master, dying childless, left him the bark. But such a petty trade did not long fit a man of his temper; his mercantile and adventurous spirit urged him to occupations and climates where greater and more rapid profits might be got. So, in 1567, he joined the expedition of his kinsman, John Hawkins, the slave-trader—not a creditable vocation to modern minds, albeit then it was an honourable calling enough, and Hawkins earned his well-known crest of a negro's head chained, by following it. This enterprise, seemingly the only occasion on which Drake was concerned in the slave-trade, failed, for the Spaniards set upon them at San Juan de Luia, the "Judith," of which Drake had command, and the "Minion," in which Hawkins sailed, being the only ships that escaped. When, in the spring of 1569, he reached England, Drake was straightway sent up to town to report the ill-success of the expedition to Cecil, Lord Burghley, the Secretary, and thus began his introductions to the great, which was a matter of importance to a pushing, business-like adventurer. Drake now swore revenge

on the whole Spanish nation; but first, of course, he must get compensation for his losses; and finding that nothing could be got out of Spain, by the Queen's letters or otherwise, he resolved to help himself. The secret of his success lies in the coolness and caution with which his sudden attacks were thought out, as is well illustrated by his behaviour on this occasion.

For he made a couple of voyages to reconnoitre and to get the requisite knowledge, and, having got this, he thereupon, with good deliberation, resolved on a third voyage with intent to land at Nombre de Dios, and sack the granary of the Spaniards' golden harvest. In May, 1572, the expedition sailed from Plymouth, and, after sundry adventures, the crew landed at their destination, and put the Spanish enemy to flight after a sharp skirmish, in which Drake received a severe and, as will be seen, a most unlucky wound. For when they came to the treasure-house, where was great store of pearls, jewels, and gold, after encouraging his men, who were somewhat backward, and "muttered of the forces of the town," he ordered the door to be broken open, but as he stepped forward to keep back the crush, "his speech, and sight, and strength failed him, and he began to faint." For fear of discouragement to his crew he had kept his wound secret till this fainting betrayed it, and so dismayed the already disheartened men that they forcibly carried their leader down to the boats, and returned to their ships treasureless. Thus did Drake's untimely swoon baffle his hope and intention of emptying "the Treasure of the World." However, for treasure he had come, and treasure he meant to have, or (as he looked on it) lawful compensation from Heaven's enemies. So, after much hardship and loss of life, rendered more bitter to Drake by the death of two brothers, leaving the sick behind and a few sound to tend them, he landed with only eighteen men and, joined by some friendly natives, set off across the isthmus.

It was on this march that he climbed that high tree whence he sighted the two oceans, and so carried away was he by his enthusiasm that he "besought Almighty God of his goodness to give him life and leave to sail once in an English ship in that sea." His prayer was granted. Wonderful enthusiasm, and pluck, and energy he must have needed, for hitherto he had failed in his enterprises; great skill, too, in keeping his hold over the spirits of his, naturally

at times, weary and disheartened crew. Twice more luck went against them. On one occasion the untimely drunkenness of a man robbed them of a rich treasure caravan. However, they sacked Venta de Cruz, and after exceeding great toil, with little to show, they returned to their one ship, the "Pasha," for they had scuttled the "Swan" to increase their land force. Another time they intercepted three caravans carrying in all thirty tons of silver, of which they took away what they could, and buried the rest; but before they could get back it had been discovered and retaken. So they returned to the Atlantic coast; but, lo! their boats were missing. A long raft was made, and off they went to hunt up the boats, which, after much risk, they found; and then after bidding a grateful farewell to their native allies, they got back to their ships, and with a fair wind ran from Cape Florida to the Scilly Isles in twenty-three days. They arrived at Plymouth on August the ninth, 1573, during sermon-time, when "the news of Drake's return did so speedily pass over all the church, and surpass their minds with desire and delight to see him, that very few or none remained with the preacher, all hastening to see evidence of Heaven's love and blessing towards our Gracious Queen and country." Notwithstanding the several blows of ill-luck, the expedition was reckoned one of the most successful that had sailed to the Indies.

Drake now joined Walter Devereux, first Earl of Essex, in Ireland. It seems that he had but little interest in the work; for, on Essex's death, in the autumn of 1576, he threw it up, and got ready for another voyage. He had now drawn on him the notice of the great, and had even told some of his adventures to Elizabeth, who doubtless urged him to further enterprise by pleasant but guarded speeches, and by exhibiting a hearty interest in his exploits; but she was far too cautious to expressly command him to further undertakings of a like nature. That would have amounted to open declaration of the war that she was trying by all her arts to ward off as long as possible.

In this next expedition he was joined by John Winter, in the "Elizabeth," eighty tons, and by three smaller vessels, the "Swan," the "Marigold," and the "Christopher," while he himself commanded in the famous "Pelican," alias the "Golden Hind," of one hundred tons. It is noteworthy, as a sign of the times, that this

fleet was well stored with provisions for bodily and mental comfort, and with rich furniture and ornaments for show, "whereby the civility and magnificence of his native country might, among all nations whithersoever he came, be the more admired." Drake had all possible luxuries, even to perfumes, and supped and dined off silver to the music of violins. It was the age of extravagant display. Money was quickly got, and as quickly spent. Men then "wore a manor on their backs;" and even Elizabeth, who seems to have been thrifty enough in many things, had some three thousand robes. Alarmists had a happily unrealised fear that such recklessness and luxury would soon undermine our English hardiness, and bring poverty on the nation.

The squadron left Plymouth on December the thirteenth, 1577. With his characteristic caution, Drake had so carefully concealed the destination of the fleet, that the crew thought they were bound for the Mediterranean, while the Spaniards naturally supposed that he would make a second descent on Nombre de Dios. The River Plate, however, was his real aim. It was on this expedition that the unpleasant Doughty episode occurred. Thomas Doughty, who went merely as a volunteer and personal friend, was put in command of a Portuguese ship that they fell in with. In a few days he was accused of appropriating objects of value; but Drake, deeming there was some private grudge under the charge, merely transferred Doughty to the "Pelican." There, however, similar complaints were brought against him; so Drake had to depose him, and sent him to the "Swan" in a private capacity. This treatment rankled in Doughty's mind, and he seems to have tried to stir up mutiny. The details are not known; but the long and short of it was that at Port St. Julian he was found guilty and executed. Drake's enemies seized on this as a handle against him; but the fact that his conduct on this occasion was never publicly questioned tends to prove that the sentence was morally and legally just. The fleet was now reduced to three ships, for the "Swan" and "Christopher" were broken up for firewood as no longer seaworthy. Soon it was to be reduced to one only, for, after clearing the Straits of Magellan, a raging storm came upon them and swept them down south. When it abated, the "Elizabeth" was lost to sight, and no

rendezvous had been fixed ; the "Marigold" they had seen swamped, and all hands lost.

Not even now had this Ulysses of the New World and his crew rest. For they landed at the island of Mocha to provision and to stretch their sea-cramped limbs ; but the natives fell upon them, killed two and wounded the rest of the company, Drake getting a severe hurt in the face. Of their two doctors, the "Pelican's" doctor was dead, and the other, for aught they knew, might be fathom-deep in the "Marigold," and "none was left but a boy, whose goodwill was more than any skill he had." Happily, Drake had some slight knowledge of surgery, and the men got well. He took no revenge on the natives, for he had no men to lose ; moreover, he saw that he and his men had been mistaken for cruel Spaniards, whose were the only white faces these islanders had hitherto seen. Therefore he nursed the greater wrath against the Spanish, and sailed away to Valparaiso, where he helped himself to their belongings.

After this, having tidings of a "certain rich ship," called "Spitfire," he fell upon it, and, "making it spit silver," sailed away with much booty. Then, after beating far up the West Coast, on account of still contrary winds he was forced to give up his cherished hope of the North-West Passage, and launched out into the Pacific. For two months on they went, till they came to the Pellew Isles, which they called the Isles of Thieves ; thence, with sundry adventures and discoveries, to Java, sticking by the way on a desperate shoal for twenty hours, and only being blown off by a lucky gust of wind. Then, rounding the Cape, Drake reached England on the twenty-sixth of September, 1580, with a rich freight and the renown of being the first Englishman who had circumnavigated the world.

Enquiry being made into his conduct, the whole ship's company, save another Doughty, bore witness that no barbarity could be laid to his charge. The plundering they admitted, but were in nowise ashamed of. This Doughty was John, the brother of Thomas, and was present at his brother's execution. We hear of him again, in 1583, as being in prison on a charge of negotiating with the King of Spain—who had set a price on Drake's head—to kill him "under colour of his own quarrel."

There were still many to clamour against

Drake as "the master-thief of the unknown world." But although the Queen hesitated to acknowledge his services, her holding back was a question of policy rather than of morality. She was unwilling to break with Spain. She had been doing her best to avert war from her own shores by playing off France against Spain ; when that failed, by her half-support of the Prince of Orange, by trusting to luck and to her powers of mystification and dissimulation, and to the extreme caution of Philip.

But diplomacy was powerless to avert the war. It had got to come ; it was in the air, so to speak. The current of public opinion, to which Elizabeth knew how to yield betimes, was daily running more strongly for war ; and already Drake, and other "sea-dogs," were showing her that the best way to "keep it out of our own gate," was to cripple the foe. So, when it was represented that the treasure Drake had brought back was enough of itself to carry on the war for seven years, she answered the Spanish Ambassador that they might blame themselves for their losses ; that the use of sea and unoccupied land, no less than of air, is common to all ; that she could not recognise the Pope's right to give away the New World. On the fourth of April, 1581, she knighted Drake on board the "Golden Hind." Nor was the famous ship that ploughed the "furrow round the earth," unhonoured ; she was long preserved at Deptford as a feasting and holiday resort, till she fell into utter decay, and a chair, made of her remnants, is preserved in the Bodleian at Oxford. Five years of well-earned repose were now enjoyed by Drake, who, as Mayor of Plymouth, in 1582, showed that he was as useful in a civil as in a warlike capacity.

Towards the end of 1585, he was at work again. Spain laid an embargo on English ships and goods ; whereupon a fleet of twenty-five sail, which Drake commanded, set forth to make reprisals, with full permission and assistance from the Queen, though, it is said, she intended to disavow him if convenient. The voyage was a sufficient success : San Domingo and Cartagena were taken and ransomed. It was on this voyage that Drake paid a visit to the Virginian colony, and was besought by the colonists to take them back. It is generally thought now that potatoes and tobacco came over with them.

Drake returned in the middle of 1586, but had no long rest ; for three months

after we find him in the Netherlands trying to concert a joint naval project. The hostile preparations of Spain were no secret, though as yet no formal declaration of war had been made. Drake's mission was not altogether unfruitful—in volunteers, recommendation, and goodwill.

Wilkes, writing to Walsingham from the Hague in November, 1586, says: "If her Majesty shall determine that Sir Francis Drake do venture again to the Indies, it is not to be doubted that he shall have some good assistance from hence." He goes on to speak of "the necessity that the Queen's principal enemy be attempted that way. If he may enjoy his Indies quietly, he will make her Majesty and these countries soon weary of their defence."

In the spring of 1587, Drake was sent out in command of a strong squadron with orders to harass the King of Spain in his warlike preparations. Seven days after, the Queen practically countermanded the order by bidding him confine his operations to the capture of ships on the open sea. Luckily these orders did not reach Drake, though one wonders what his conduct would have been if they had, for he was as fearless of responsibility as of an enemy. So, in happy ignorance, Drake performed that well-known "singing of the Spanish King's beard." Such an insult, it was felt, could not and would not be overlooked; the crash must come speedily now, and all the Captains were agreed that their one chance of victory was in making haste so to maim the Spaniards as to prevent all possibility of their landing anywhere in the British Isles.

A few repetitions of Drake's last exploit would have had the desired result; but in this good policy they were thwarted by the Queen's indecision and by violent storms; so that the Armada had time to be repaired and to appear just three hundred years ago, in full force off the Lizard; but, luckily for us, under bad management. The tale has been often told; we need not do more here than just mention how Medina Sidonia might have penned the English in Plymouth Sound; how, when he found Drake and Howard had joined, instead of stopping to fight he made straight for Calais, in the hope of communicating with the Duke of Parma; and how "his feathers were plucked one by one" on the way.

Thence, driven panic-struck by fireships, he was brought to bay off Gravelines, the

chief command falling to Drake, as Howard was somewhat in the rear, engaged in the capture of some vessel. Even when beaten, the foe seemed to Drake "wonderful great and strong." But they were utterly cowed, and Oquenda's brave retort to Medina Sidonia, "Let others talk of being lost, your Excellency has only to order up fresh cartridge," was not seconded, and the Spaniards fled home by way of the Orkneys.

All hope of Spain repeating her attempt was crushed by the expedition for reprisals that the Queen sent out in the spring of 1589. The shipping provisions at Corunna were destroyed; but otherwise the voyage was a great failure. It had been put under the divided command of Drake and Sir John Norris; it was victualled in the same scanty way as the year before; it was marked by a terrible loss of life.

Drake now again enjoyed a few years of repose before taking his last voyage. In 1593, he sat in Parliament for Plymouth, interesting himself in the water-supply and fortifications of that town, building flour-mills, and otherwise conducting himself usefully.

At the end of 1594, the Queen ordered him on a voyage with the same John Hawkins with whom he had begun his career. The expedition was foredoomed to failure; for it was not ready till August, 1595, and by then the Spaniards had got full particulars and had taken the needful precautions. As they came off Porto Rico, Hawkins died. The town had been put in a state of defence; other towns they found emptied of their treasure, so they could only burn them; and everywhere forts and batteries blocked their way. Drake was nearly worn out with dysentery, and that vexation proved too much for him. He died on the twenty-ninth of January, 1596.

MICHAELMAS DAISIES.

You wonder, darling, why I love
These late-blown daisies far above
The wealth of summer hours;
And why, since roses linger yet,
Although with autumn's dewdrops wet,
I wear these simple flowers.

Ah, child! the buds that blow for you
By spring winds shaken, washed with dew
From summer's tender skies,
Are not for me. I cannot wear
The rose you pluck with loving care,
The lily that you prize.

I had my roses long ago;
Fair thornless flowers, that filled with glow
And sweetness all my heart.

I had my lilies white and gold,
My hands were full as hands could hold
Of joys that left no smart.

But lo ! they dropped, the roses red
That love had bound upon my head,
With bliss that seemed divine ;
And dropped my lilies gold and white,
Fair symbols of the pure delight
That was so surely mine.

Ah child ! I lost with those dear flowers
The last of all my summer hours ;
I turned my stricken face,
Like Hezekiah, to the wall ;
Life's autumn leaves were swift to fall,
And winter came apace.

My roses never bloomed again,
But God had pity on my pain,
And gave me in their stead
Such simple, humble flowers as these,
Not joy of heart, but poor heart's ease,
And I was comforted.

In lieu of love's most sacred ends
He gave good work to make amends,
My broken heart to bind ;
For close heart-ties, denied to me,
He gave wide sympathies to be
A link to human kind.

So not unhappy, not unblest,
My heart is waiting for its rest—
The sure rest that remains ;
And as the years go softly by,
I learn to count with equal eye
Life's losses and its gains.

My gathered flowers are safe, I know,
And where they are, I, too, shall go—
Ah, love ! your teardrops start ?
Nay, see my purple autumn flowers,
So life for me, in all its hours,
Hath gold, pure gold, at heart !

A DEAD LETTER.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

UNCLE ANDREW ALISON was not an easy or a pleasant person to live with. Audrey and I, his two nieces, both feared and detested him, and I cannot say how truly thankful I was when Duncan Ferrars asked me to be his wife. Audrey and I had lived with Uncle Andrew ever since when, in my seventh year and Audrey's ninth, our father had died in Canada—first in a small house in Holloway, then, after our uncle grew rich and was knighted, in a large house in Bedford Square, which was, I believe, the dullest abode in all London.

Our mother had died soon after our father, and, as Audrey and I did not get on well together, it may be easily imagined that a good, true-hearted man's love—though that man was only a poor struggling young doctor—was a real blessing to me.

Uncle Andrew was, I have often heard, one of the cleverest and most influential railway contractors of his day. He and my father had started in business, when

they were both young, with a small joint capital which had gradually grown into a colossal fortune. I do not wonder at this, for Uncle Andrew was careful of money almost to miserliness. Audrey and I had a small allowance, and throughout the whole establishment any luxury of furniture, food, or culture, was sternly forbidden as extravagance.

How my father had bequeathed his interest in the business he had helped to build up, or why, in default of a will, some legal settlement had not been made on our behalf, were questions which occurred to Duncan and me more than once when we began to consider ways and means. But to these questions I could give no answer at all. The only person who might have thrown some light on the subject was my mother's cousin, Cyril Holmes, who was a great friend of both of us, but especially of Audrey. However, Cyril, though he had been in the employment of Alison Brothers for many years, was no better informed than ourselves. As to asking my uncle directly, that was an extreme measure not to be resorted to lightly.

It was because Cyril Holmes's admiration of Audrey was no secret that Uncle Andrew frequently took the opportunity of telling us that he was a lazy, worthless fellow, who would never make his way in the world, or be worth the salary he drew. To these attacks, Audrey always listened with indifference, which would not have been the case had she really loved poor Cyril.

My uncle also took great pains to acquaint me with the extremely low estimation in which he held Cyril's friend, Duncan Ferrars; but this carefully instilled knowledge did not prevent us from deciding to ask his consent to our speedy marriage.

My lover obtained but a brief audience in which to plead our cause. From the sitting-room window, in which Audrey and I spent our mornings, I saw him come to the front door, and soon after I saw him go. It was not difficult to fill in the hiatus of that ten minutes.

The front door had barely closed behind Duncan when Lee, my uncle's confidential man, came to tell me that Sir Andrew wished to speak to me in the library.

If Audrey had cared for me as elder sisters sometimes care, she would by that time have been comforting me a little and trying to keep up my courage. As it

was, so soon as I told her that Duncan was coming across the Square, she began to practise the noisy part of the Moonlight Sonata, and only stopped playing, when Lee brought his message, to say :

" My goodness, Sylvia, I wouldn't be in your shoes—you're going to catch it."

" I don't care if I am," I replied, defiantly. " It will soon be over."

" He'll forbid you to see Mr. Ferrars again."

" I shan't be forbidden."

" You'll do yourself very little good by defying him."

" I shall do myself less by throwing Duncan over," I returned.

Audrey raised her eyebrows and twisted round on the music stool, which gave a horrid creak, as if it were jeering at me. Then Lee tapped at the door again.

" Sir Andrew's message was for Miss Sylvia to come directly," and he held the door open for me to pass. Lee was no friend of ours. He looked almost glad to have to hurry me to hear my fate.

My uncle was sitting in his big easy-chair with his back to the light, holding the *Times* newspaper before him. As he was a small thin man, he was completely hidden from me till such time as he should choose to lay down the paper, which he could not have been reading very intently, though he let me wait five minutes by the clock, pretending not to have heard Leo's announcement or my tremulous : " You sent for me, Uncle Andrew—here I am."

Presently he emerged from behind the paper which he had laid down, and looked at me. He had a small, thin, clean-shaven face, with resolute lines round his large mouth; his eyes were more piercing than any human eyes I have ever seen, and their keenness rarely softened, never entirely gave place to any other expression. I sometimes used to wonder if my father was or ever would have grown like his brother. The thought crossed me now, as taking off his heavy gold pince-nez and looking straight at me, he said :

" Ah, Audrey—I mean Sylvia—there you are. Now, what is all this nonsense ? "

" What is all what nonsense, uncle ? I'm afraid I don't understand."

" Yes, you do, miss ; don't waste my time with silly prevarications"—then I saw that I might as well put away any faint lingering hope I had ventured to bring into the room—" you understand me perfectly. I repeat: What is all this nonsense ? "

" Perhaps, Uncle Andrew, our ideas of nonsense are not the same. Perhaps what you are calling nonsense is not nonsense to me." I tried to answer with composure, but my words rushed out in the most undignified flurry.

" Humph ! " returned my uncle, " I have no doubt that your ideas of sense are vague in the extreme, so are young Ferguson's—Fellow's—what's his name ? I suppose you know whom I mean, and that he has been here"—he raised himself sharply and leaned forward towards me. " He seems, from what he came to say and the way he said it, to be a fair specimen of a nincompoop."

" Yes, I knew Duncan had been here, I saw him come."

" Duncan, indeed ! Why do you call him Duncan ? I thought his name was Fletcher, or Fenton, or something else beginning with F. Why do you call him Duncan ? "

" Mr. Ferrars's christian-name is Duncan, Uncle Andrew, and I speak of him by that name because I—because we have promised—because he has asked me—" Oh ! if I could only have spoken boldly ; but with those eyes on me, and those thin lips twitching to interrupt me, I could not keep from stammering.

" I can help you out," he said, grimly, " because Mr. Ferrars—you said Ferrars, didn't you ? —has already let me into the secret. According to his version, he, a penniless young fellow, who has just finished walking the hospitals, hopes to make a good thing out of marrying the niece of the great contractor, eh ? "

" He doesn't hope anything of the sort !" I cried, angrily.

" Ah, indeed ; then I misunderstood. I gleaned from what he said—in fact he put it in the plainest terms—that he did wish to marry you, and that you wished to marry him."

" Yes, that is quite true ; but he does not want me because I am your niece, nor because he hopes to benefit by a connection with you, but because he loves me."

" Indeed, that is most disinterested of him," returned my uncle, with a sneer. " Then his visit to me was merely to see how I should take the news that my penniless niece wanted to marry a pauper."

" I don't know what you mean by a pauper. Duncan has money enough to buy a practice, and to furnish a small house."

" Very good—for him—but that makes

no difference to the other part of the programme. If he isn't absolutely a beggar—*you are*."

"I'm not a beggar, Uncle Andrew!" I cried, indignantly. It was too despotic a fiat to be submitted to.

"Ain't you, Miss Pert? I think you had better think matters over before you give me a flat contradiction."

"But you—you—" I began, too much excited to get on with my answer.

"I said so," he broke in. "You have calculated on me; you know I am well-to-do, and your high-flown young sawbones thinks a wealthy contractor would be a very comfortable figure in the background of his domestic felicity."

"We never took you and your wealth into account at all," I retorted. "We should have been most foolish to hope for any assistance from you. But I should like to know how I can be a beggar, when my father invested all his money in the business which has made a millionaire of you."

My uncle had leaned back in his chair again. I could not see his face, partly because of the shadow, and partly because my eyes swam with the difficulty and excitement of bringing these difficult words over my lips. He did not answer, and I felt I had gained an advantage.

"Audrey and I cannot have cost you so very much," I went on, gathering courage. "We have been brought up more inexpensively than girls generally are—"

"In fact, I have defrauded you from your childhood," he said, drily; "and now you are going to have it out with me."

"You did as you thought right," I replied, more submissively; the sound of his voice told me that I was going to be humbled. "But now I am twenty-one, and Audrey is twenty-three, and we have talked it over with Duncan, and we should like—"

"To have your father's money, with compound interest," he interrupted again. "In two words that is what it all means; eh?"

"We hope you will settle something. Please do, Uncle Andrew. I don't understand about money matters, but Duncan says—"

Once more he interrupted me, and this time even more impatiently than before.

"Don't understand about money matters! No, I should think you didn't; but for all that, you and your journeyman doctor want to audit my accounts, and to pry into

my private concerns for the last five-and-twenty years. Well, then, you'd better have the bank-books, and the cheque-books, and the letter-books, public and private, and work back through them, if you could, to the year 1868—the year we were out in Canada; you would find the funds of Alison Brothers at a very low level at that epoch; and you would also find that the elder brother—you know," he broke off, "which was the elder brother, I suppose?"

"It was father," I rejoined, and in my inmost heart I believed that he was building up a story as he went on, which should justify his making no settlement on us.

"Yes, it was your father, and you'd find that he, the elder one who signed for the firm, was mixed up in a lot of risky speculations, and that, in spite of the younger brother's expostulations, he made several visits to New York and one into Mexico. He was going to grow rich all at once—that is quite within a woman's comprehension—only, unfortunately, there were some complications, and out of the complications came a terrible crisis, the whole details of which did not transpire to the public. And one fine morning the younger brother found himself alone in the world, facing a heavy responsibility, which he had not incurred himself, but for which he was not wholly unprepared. I hope you understand it all. It required immense exertions to regain the lost prestige, and most assiduous work to recover from the money damage; but I have done it. And now I hope you understand."

"You mean," I said—though my mind absolutely refused to accept this story of which I had never before heard a hint—"that my father lost everything of his own, therefore we have nothing; and that, as he nearly ruined you, we must consider you most generous to have fed us, clothed us, and educated us from the time we were left orphans."

"That is near enough to my meaning," he said.

"Well, Uncle Andrew," I said, "so far from this being an impediment to my marriage, I consider it an additional reason for it. Mr. Ferrars loves me; he will be only too glad to take me from dependence on charity to a home of my own."

It was an ungrateful speech; it was the only way in which I could give vent to the bitterness of the doubt which his words had awakened in me. My uncle bent his head.

"I shall be very well rid of the charge of you. You have always been a troublesome, hot-headed girl. If you had deferred to my wishes, or shown any common sense about your marriage, I should have made you an allowance—for my own sake, and because people would expect it of me—but, since you take this defiant tone, I give you full leave to go to-morrow—to pauperism, if the doctor is ready. You are your father over again: you want to play with ruin. You won't find it a very pleasant companion. I have no more to say to you—you can go."

I went slowly and heavily back to the sitting-room, where Audrey was still at the piano. She looked up enquiringly.

"You've been a long time, and you look perfectly ghastly," she said. "What did he please to say?"

"He told me a great tissue of the basest lies," I cried, my indignation breaking forth. "I couldn't have believed he could have done anything so bad."

"Lies about Duncan?" she asked. "And how do you know they are lies?"

"Not about Duncan—about father. Audrey, do you think it possible that our father was a swindling speculator, and that he died a bankrupt?"

"I never heard it before," said Audrey, composedly. "But we know so little about him that it might be possible. Railway folks do speculate and swindle sometimes, and fall bankrupt, don't they?"

"Oh, Audrey, how can you talk so? Cyril knows nothing of this, I am sure. I won't believe it unless some one else tells it me." And I repeated the whole tale to Audrey.

"I don't see why it shouldn't be true," she said, at the end. "Of course Uncle Andrew wouldn't talk about it unnecessarily, and as it all happened in America nearly twenty years ago, why should Cyril, who is only thirty, know about it? And so," she added, "he has knocked your engagement on the head."

"That he hasn't. He has only concocted this story to get out of parting with any of the money, which has been in his hands so long that he looks on it as his own. He thinks two girls like us will believe anything, and he knows we have no remedy. He cares for nothing but money."

"Well, and how is it to be with your engagement? I suppose you will have to wait till Duncan is a little better off."

"I shall not do any such thing, nor will

Duncan wish to. If Uncle Andrew thinks he can spoil this happiness for me he is mistaken."

"You will be a fool to defy him. Of course he will be perfectly justified in doing nothing for you if you do defy him."

"I should be a bigger fool if I made Duncan and myself miserable in deference to him; and as to doing anything for me, I tell you I don't believe that story about our father; and what he finds a good excuse for shirking now, he would always try to shirk—that is, he'll never part with his precious thousands till he dies, and then most likely he will bequeath them for the building of some hospital, so that his name may be handed down as that of a public benefactor."

"Sylvia," returned Audrey, "it is no use reasoning with you. You will have your own way, I know. All I can say is that I, in your place, should be guided by Uncle Andrew's wishes."

So the discussion ended; and a few weeks afterwards Duncan and I were married very quietly at Saint Pancras Church. Cyril Holmes gave me away; but Audrey did not come to the wedding. She did not even ask me at what o'clock it was to be.

THE ANGLER IN FRANCE.

A SUNDAY in the middle of June is always chosen by the French Government for the opening day of the fresh-water fishing in France. The reason why Sunday is fixed upon is that, as the sport is so essentially democratic and beloved of the people, the day on which they are free to fish from sunrise to sunset is naturally the one most suited for the opening of the season.

The typical angler in France is a species quite apart. The French gentleman rarely touches so vulgar a sport as fishing, for the rivers are not preserved, have very little fish in them, and can be netted and fished by any one. But though the scarcity of fish increases day by day, the number of anglers belonging to the "petite bourgeoisie," and particularly to the working classes, increases even faster; and the fewer the fish, the greater is the fanaticism of the fishermen.

Every one has seen the rows of workmen who line the Parisian quays, and watch patiently hour after hour for the fish that refuses to be beguiled. It is a curious

sight, but not to be compared to the spectacle afforded by the banks of a country river. The real French angler who lives but in the fishing season, whose art is his religion, and who fishes even in his dreams, must be sought in the country. Alexander and the great Condé might sleep on the eve of a decisive battle, but not so the angler on the night before his opening day. He is in a terrible state of nervous excitement, and bustles his wife, and harries his children, and becomes as amiable as a mad dog if the long and heavy pole which he uses for a fishing-rod is not ready and in good order. But in spite of all this he has the reputation of being a loving husband, an excellent father, and the possessor of all the family virtues. The purity of his morals and the placidity of his temper are proverbial; and he has need of all the cardinal virtues to enable him to support with stoic fortitude the shower of jokes of which he is the object. The caricaturists could not live through the summer without him; he is the butt of whom they never tire; but for all that he goes on his way unmoved, and only death can keep him from the sport he follows with such enthusiastic zeal.

During the siege of Paris, in spite of the shells that sang overhead, and of the Prussian sentinels on the look-out for a mark, a great many of these bold sportsmen risked their lives outside the city fortifications, and went "taquiner le goujon" on the banks of the Seine. These are the enthusiastic anglers who count the days and nights to the opening day, and who pass the off-season in a state of settled melancholy. These are the men who know every inch of the river's banks, and the holes in which the quarry lies hid, and who stand motionless hour after hour, holding their breath, heedless of rain, wind, and sun, half mesmerised by the gentle bobbing of the float on which their eyes are fixed. They will pass the night under a haystack in order to secure at the first streak of dawn a good place where some legendary bite had occurred, and which they have carefully ground-baited overnight.

Though a careful man, the French fisherman never sells the contents of his basket; he fishes for his family; and the proudest hour of the day, second only to the rapturous moment of capture, is when he sees the "friture" placed upon the table. The gudgeon, the roach, the eel, the tench, the barbel, the carp, the perch, and the

pike are all welcome to the angler's paste or maggot, for fly-fishing he considers frivolous, and as requiring a skill that is out of place in so serious a pursuit. But although the net has almost swept the French rivers clear of fish, it is against the modest angler that the law has fulminated its edicts. The fisherman may not make use of more than one line, and may only have one hook at the end of that line; he may not put his rod on the ground, but must hold it in his hand; he is bound to leave the river at sunset, and may not begin to fish till sunrise.

The village policeman, who for the greater part of the year has absolutely nothing to do, is entrusted with the execution of these decrees. His assistant is the "garde-champêtre," whose official hatred of anglers is only equalled by their detestation of him. This functionary never misses an opportunity of worrying the fishermen from the neighbouring town, who crowd the country on fine Sundays, much to the disgust of the peasants.

Not long ago, on the banks of the Marne, a "garde-champêtre" caught an angler using two rods at the same time, and warned him of the crime he was committing in thus breaking the laws of his country. For some time the angler made use of only one rod, but after a while, as all seemed safe, he put together his second rod, and resumed his illegal sport. This was what the "garde-champêtre" was waiting for. He dashed out of his ambush, secure of victory. Retreat being impossible, the angler seized his rods and the rest of his tackle, plunged into the river, and swam across to the other side. But the "garde-champêtre" was not so easily beaten. He stripped off his Sunday blouse, and started in pursuit. When he reached the other side, the fisherman helped him up the bank; but, untouched by the kindness, he gasped:

"I arrest you, in the name of the law."
"You arrest me! By what right?"
"I am the garde-champêtre."
"That's as may be. Where is your badge?"

As the poor "garde-champêtre" had left all his clothes on the opposite bank, he saw that he had been outwitted. He plunged into the water to get his insignia of office, but long before he reached them the angler was out of sight, feeling that he had scored one in the never-ending triangular duel between fish, fisherman, and "garde-champêtre."

ENGLAND A CENTURY HENCE.

A SPECULATIVE FORECAST.

WHEN an old fellow like myself is occasionally compelled to listen to the sneering criticisms of the rising generation, on the manners and customs of the England of my young days, I cannot help asking myself a fugitive conundrum or two, as to what generations to come may think of the present one.

It is all very well to pooh-pooh the past; but we ought at the same time to endeavour to imagine that we ourselves will in turn be pooh-poohed by a generation which has managed to find out a little more of the hitherto unknowable, and plumes itself on its absolute perfection accordingly.

It will require but little fanciful exaggeration to picture a very much changed England in A.D. 1988. Long before that date, in all probability, steam will have been superseded by electricity; the railways of to-day will be unknown; the lumbering, puffing locomotives, of which we are now so proud, will have been relegated to the region of the useless, even as the good old stage-coach has been, and noiseless hundred-mile-an-hour electric engines will have taken their places. Possibly even these latter will be found too cumbersome for our progressive successors of a century hence. Who knows but that the pneumatic tube may be so improved upon that passengers, in days to come, may be shot along from station to station at a speed which, with our nineteenth century knowledge, we can but guess at?

In ocean travelling a similar progress will be noted. Before many years—I had nearly written before many months—have elapsed, it will undoubtedly be possible to cross the Atlantic in four days. Already, the Americans are paving the way with an ocean steamer which will be capable of running twenty-two knots an hour, and that will probably be a snail's pace to the Atlantic greyhounds of 1988. Possibly by that time, Atlantic steamers will be principally used for freight, passengers being conveyed from New York to Liverpool by balloon. A balloon voyage across the Atlantic has long been the dream of adventurous aéronauts, and it is very likely to become an accomplished fact before another century has passed away. If it is true that at about three miles above terra firma the wind blows constantly from west to east, at about sixty miles an hour, it

but remains for a balloon to reach that altitude and do the passage across the Atlantic in a couple of days. The drawbacks which at present exist in connection with such a passage are serious ones, I admit. The sixty-mile wind current has not, so far as I know, been satisfactorily proved, nor is it certain that our present balloons could keep afloat for the length of time necessary to complete the journey. But balloons, like everything else, are being gradually improved upon, and by the time another century has joined its predecessors, balloons, or more correctly, aérial ships, may be a popular method of travelling.

The telephone, too, will be an important factor in the England of the future. It seems wild, even in this age of surprises, to think of being able to actually talk to a person three thousand miles away; but that it will come to pass, the most superficial observer of modern progress would scarcely like to deny. In ordinary everyday life, too, electricity is certain to be widely utilised, and coal and gas will be gathered to their fathers, having done their duty well, but having become too old-fashioned for the Englishman of 1988.

Talking of being "gathered to their fathers" reminds me that our present method of disposing of the dead will probably be unknown at the period referred to, and the critic of that day will wonder what sort of barbarians we were to be guilty of converting the earth into a huge graveyard.

The graveyard of 1988 will be a crematorium, and the ashes of departed friends will find an honoured resting-place on the mantel-shelf, or be carried about, as we now carry locks of their hair, in a little gold locket attached to the watch-chain. The barbarian horrors of yawning graves, and rats, and worms, and mouldy vaults, and decaying skeletons, will have disappeared for aye, and the little locket or bosom amulet will be the coffin of the future.

Marriages will probably be simplified in a similar fashion. Lengthy engagements, elaborate preparations, and ridiculous expenditure will have received their quietus, and John Smith and Mary Jones will be "bound over" to love and honour each other for life with one-tenth of the formality which surrounds the ceremony now. Their children will be educated and clothed in a rational manner, for scamped intellectual training and frost-bitten little limbs would be out of place in

an age of real progress. Altogether, the Mr. and Mrs. Smith of 1988 will be much better off than the Mr. and Mrs. Smith of to-day.

The dress of the future, too, will most likely be as great an improvement on the dress of to-day, as the dress of to-day is on that of, say, the Elizabethan age. People will have learned that it is more sensible to dress for comfort than for attraction ; for by that time they will have perceived that it is possible for attractiveness and comfort to go hand in hand. Ear-rings, for instance, will be conspicuous by their absence—indeed, even now they are gradually making their exit—and twentieth century people will wonder how we could have been so heathenish as to allow our wives and sisters to emulate the barbarity of the savage by piercing their ears for the sake of ornament. The hideous bustle will also have died a natural death, and the tortured waist be unknown. Women probably will have realised—what some of them in our own day have already realised—that woollen vests and flannel knickerbockers are by far more healthy than the ordinary system of attire, and that suspenders are decidedly more comfortable than the obnoxious garter. Elderly ladies will have found out that trailing garments are utterly unsuitable for persons in the decline of life, and women generally will have discarded the corset for the more attractive and far more sensible flowing costume of classical Greece.

In male attire similar reform will have been accomplished. The unhealthy and ungainly "chimney-pot" hat will be a thing of the past, and men will have learned that a flannel-backed waistcoat is by far more conducive to longevity than the flimsy material we employ at present. In the item of dress alone, the future Englishman and Englishwoman will have realised the saying attributed to Edward the First, that "it is impossible to add to or diminish real worth by outward apparel." At present the inherent belief in the tailor making the man, and the mistaken ideas as to what constitutes attractiveness, present formidable barriers to dress reform, which only years can surmount.

The domestic servant of the future seems at first sight to be incongruous material for an article such as the present, but it certainly is an item which will have to be reckoned with ere long. At present, it is next to impossible to obtain a satisfactory

domestic servant. And why ? Simply because there are so many other occupations open to girls, that they are unwilling to undergo the apparent degradation of domestic service. For, deny it as we may, there exists in the minds of many working girls a close analogy between service and serfdom. Girls—and I cannot bring myself to blame them for it—like their freedom as well as the rest of us, and that freedom is more easily obtainable in the workroom, or the shop, than in the kitchen. How will the people of 1988 get over the domestic service difficulty ? Well, in all probability, associated homes will take the place of isolated houses, or, in other words, flats—among middle-class people, at all events—will be substituted for "self-contained" houses. By this means the "degradation" difficulty will be overcome. The domestic servant will be simply an employé. A number of trained servants will be attached to the associated homes, and will have their working hours like the shop-girls of to-day. A certain number will be "on duty" while the others are at play, and just as night and day shifts are now arranged in certain departments of male occupations, so will the domestic service of the future be regulated. In 1841, the number of female servants was one in fifteen of the population. In 1881, the number of both male and female was one in twenty-two. It will require but very elementary arithmetic to calculate the chances of obtaining a domestic servant in 1988.

Finally, there is but little doubt that the England of a century hence will be a much healthier country than the England of to-day. As medical science progresses, so will infectious disease gradually fade away. But for medical science to progress as it ought to do, the restrictions under which it at present struggles will have to be lessened. Nowadays doctors engage in their profession for a living ; they have no time to worry after discovery, nor in all probability would discovery pay.

The practitioner who has to earn his bread by toiling from morning to night among his patients, has no leisure to study and think out the niceties of the development of disease. His business is simply to get his patient well again, if possible, by stereotyped methods, collect his fees, and feed and clothe his family on his earnings. The English of a century hence will probably have changed all that. The physicians of that day will, very possibly, be state-

paid officials, will receive suitable salaries, and will have their night and day shifts, like the servant girls. Their employment will be so arranged that a certain number of them will always be at work finding out new developements and experimenting on disease germs. There will thus be greater facilities offered for fresh discoveries in medical science, while a compulsory autopsy of all corpses will hasten the perfection of a science which may in time defy death. The idea of state-paid doctors may seem Utopian, yet no less an authority than Sir Morell Mackenzie has before now advocated it as the one method of making medicine a really progressive science. The England of 1888 pays soldiers to kill people. The England of 1988 will pay doctors to keep people alive.

The possible fatures of monarchy, religion, and politics offer many inducements to the speculative mind; but it is, of course, impossible to refer to them here. It will be sufficient to say that when I think of what England is now, and what she will probably become a hundred years hence, I am more than sorry that I wasn't born a century later.

But I suppose that can hardly be helped now!

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

By C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VII.

GASPARD felt a little surprised at his own indifference to the straw of hope his mother had permitted him to grasp. The chance of her neglecting, either from carelessness or cowardice, to register her protest against the legality of his marriage before a year elapsed, and letting it thus become lawful by default, was, he admitted to himself, the most likely mode in which Madame Harache would yield to his demands, and was, perhaps, the only one possible to a woman of her nature. Because she was so hard, a little softening on her part meant more than effusive promises from others; and it seemed to Gaspard almost certain that if he could only bring himself to endure patiently his own and Thora's nondescript position for the ten months that had yet to elapse before the anniversary of the day when they two plighted the Troth of Odin—a long time, indeed, in which to submit to a repute which, in the young man's clear-seeing, honest eyes, dis-

graced him as much as the girl on whom his love had brought shame!—he would be able to present her to all the world as his unquestioned wife. He was glad, thankful to have this to look forward to, he said; and yet all the characteristics of gladness were absent from his mind. He thought, at first, that it was only because his nature was so bowed with the degrading worry and distress that had followed his passionate action, that it could not rebound at once to happiness; but as he walked homewards the depression did not grow less, but greater, and as he reached his own door he felt a sudden disinclination to go in and meet his wife. Then a swift flash of memory showed him the brightly lighted little salon at Monsieur Meudon's—his master leaning back in his easy-chair; Madame Reyer, who permitted herself no such indulgence, sitting upright in hers, and studying some of those political or economic pamphlets which, in her character of a woman of intellect, she felt bound to read; Sophie, in a corner, bending over her embroidery. A sigh of longing for the brightness, harmony, and rest his mind pictured brought him to himself with a shock; and he realised that his passion for Thora had vanished, or had taken a lower place in his life than he had guessed, and that now he loved Sophie Meudon. He was aghast at himself; bewildered, too, that such a thing should have happened—it seemed so incredible that his heart should be faithless to a beautiful woman for the sake of a plain one. Then in an instant came the consciousness that he was, after all, free; that there was no tie between him and the beautiful, untaught girl, which he could not break at will. It was possible to him to regain all he had lost—prosperity and comfort, and the love and companionship of his kindred, if only he chose to do what he desired most, and make Sophie Meudon his wife. If only he chose!

He uttered a passionate exclamation, half a prayer and half a curse; and turning from his own door, walked for hours through the dark streets.

When he returned it was so late that he could cherish a reasonable hope that Thora would be in bed and asleep. He did not want to be forced to speak to her to-night; there were too many conflicting passions in his soul. But Thora was awake, and moreover, was very much out of temper.

" You are later than ever, Gaspard," she said, irritably. " Every time you go to

your master's house you stay longer. If you go on like this, you will soon be living there altogether."

Gaspard glanced at her in a startled manner, and a red spot burned on each of his cheeks.

"Monsieur Meudon's is the only house I visit, Thora," he answered; "his family the only society I permit myself."

"I am permitted no society at all," she retorted. "You don't care how lonely I am, so long as you amuse yourself!"

"I give you all the amusements I can. I have taken you to the theatre, to concerts; but you do not care for these things."

"No, of course not, when I cannot understand half of what is said, and the music—if you call it music—makes my head ache. You promised me a good deal more than this when you persuaded me to leave Stromness."

"You were ready enough to come," said Gaspard, bitterly, remembering that it was she who had suggested the irregular marriage when he had meant to give her up.

"And you were ready enough to take me," was the answer. "I have lost more than I gained by marrying you."

"I might say the same with equal truth, Thora; and you do not make my loss easy to bear."

Thora went on without heeding his words.

"You deceived me; you promised me a hundred things you could never give me—a very different life from that I lead here. You knew well enough that I would never have left my home and my friends for this."

"Do you wish to return to your home and your friends; to leave me, and, if possible, forget that you have ever seen me?" asked Gaspard, in a voice that sounded harsh from anxiety as to what her reply might be.

"What is the good of talking of that?" she answered, with an angry carelessness. "I am your wife now, and we must make the best of each other."

The hectic colour faded out of Gaspard's face; he bent his head in acquiescence with her words.

"You are right," he said, gravely. "You are my wife, and we must make the best of each other; but for Heaven's sake, let it be the best. We shall have much to bear from the world for each other's sake; let us find what compensation we can in our love and truth."

She looked at him with bewildered eyes.

"I don't know what you are talking about in that—that play-acting fashion;

but I know what you do—leave me for hours to mope by myself, while you are talking to an old man whom you see every day, and to his sharp-tongued sister and ugly daughter."

"Do not speak of people whom you do not know, and who are—different from you."

"I don't want to know them, and I don't want to speak of them—people who make such a fuss about my husband and take no notice of me!"

The reason of the conduct she complained of checked Gaspard's rising anger.

"You are tired, *chérie*," he said gently, "and you look at everything gloomily. But I meant to tell you to-night that I intended to go no more to Monsieur Meudon's. It is not right that I should go to a house where you, my wife, are not received."

Thora looked at him in some surprise, as women do when a complaint they have made without much thought is admitted as reasonable. Her protest had been merely a safety valve for her fretfulness. She was less pleased than astonished to have Gaspard yield to her wishes.

"Do as you like," she said, coldly; and she almost turned her face away from the kiss he gave her, not knowing that it cost him an effort, and that it was the seal of a sacrifice.

After this, Gaspard became habitually gloomy. Occasionally, too, he was irritable, and found fault with Thora for some trifling fault, some awkwardness or stupidity due to her ignorance; making her in turn sullen, as well as discontented. His fate pressed too heavily upon him. He had accepted the punishment of his rashness, but he could not help crying out under it; neither could he help being conscious how much he was giving up for the sake of his duty to Thora, and expecting from her compensation for his loss. But Thora never suspected that he had made any sacrifice for her, and, knowing only her own loneliness and disappointment, met him, as often as not, with angry words or sullen silence. She could not otherwise than out of temper with her circumstances, unless Gaspard had explained to her whence they arose; and this he would have counted it an insult to her to do.

She was only a beautiful dullard, incapable of being in any true sense a companion to him, and he knew this perfectly well; but he respected her; and, knowing that she did not merit reproach, would not let her know that the shadow of shame

had fallen upon her. That she should be to him as his wife, and should believe herself his wife, were the things he had set forth to himself as his duty. But it was a duty which was a martyrdom, and he was not strong enough to repress all signs of pain.

Monsieur Meudon watched his face, and reported every change in its expression to Madame Harache. Taking the sadness of it into account with the half confession of which she had told him, the two arrived at a conclusion not far from the truth. The only thing they forgot was that through Gaspard's gentler nature there ran a vein of his mother's obstinacy.

"Let us wait a few days, a week or two, longer, and Gaspard will be ready to consent to anything we want. At present he declines all invitations to my house; but I can see that the refusal costs him an effort. For the present he is struggling with a young man's far-fetched ideas of right and wrong; but that can end in only one way. If he is tired of this girl, all is well. When both inclination and interest point in one direction, he is certain, soon or late, to take it."

Madame Reyer remarked upon the cessation of Gaspard's visits.

"I thought he was becoming sincerely attached to Sophie," she said to her brother, "and if a man can grow to love a girl like her, he should not tire of her quickly."

"Gaspard will come again some day, ma sour; at present there are complications."

"Explain yourself, Pierre."

Monsieur Meudon did explain, chuckling over his diplomacy; but his sister did not see the matter in the same light as he.

"You are doing wrong," she said, decidedly; "and if Madame Harache approves of your action, she is a disgrace to womanhood. There is a sex in sins, and though a conspiracy of this sort is bad enough in you, a man, it is wholly unpardonable in a woman. To rob another woman of her good name! It is detestable!"

"Catherine, you become romantic in your old age. Is Madame Harache to let her son ruin his life for a folly?"

"He must pay the price of his folly, even though it be ruin. You do not improve the matter by changing the folly into a crime."

"Bah! Would you tie every young man to an unworthy woman to make him expiate the weakness of a moment?"

"No; but this is not a question of an

unworthy woman. She is innocent; she loves him; she is essentially his wife."

"The law does not consider her so."

"The law is an idiot; and it was not made for cases like this. This girl believes that she is married to Gaspard Harache, you say. Some form of marriage, satisfactory to her conscience, has passed between them. That is the essential, the true bond, and Gaspard's duty is to be faithful to it. Let the law say what it will, in Heaven's sight this girl is Gaspard's wife."

"Take care," said Monsieur Meudon, abruptly; for the door had opened softly, and Sophie was in the room.

She had come to look for a thimble she had forgotten, she explained. Having found it, she noticed, apparently for the first time, her father's troubled face.

"Petit papa, has anything happened to annoy you?" she asked, kissing him, and pulling his short and stubby beard in a caressing fashion.

"No, nothing, chérie. Leave us for the present," he said, hastily.

And Sophie went away, turning round at the door to cast a smile of exquisite unintelligence across the room.

"Ah! how innocent she is!" exclaimed the father, tenderly.

"Perhaps," replied Madame Reyer, drily.

The little pantomime, which deceived Monsieur Meudon, served to enlighten her. She knew just enough of her niece to be sure that when Sophie appeared particularly stupid and innocent, some subtle thought was moving in her brain. She perceived now that Sophie had overheard some part of the conversation, and she did not wholly regret it.

"It may prevent her thinking too much of Gaspard," she thought. "It would be a pity for her to cherish any feeling for a man who cannot marry her."

Next day Monsieur Meudon asked Gaspard to visit him that evening. The young man tried to excuse himself.

"But I have something of importance to say to you," said the master.

"I will attend you at the office, then."

"At the office we are liable to interruptions, and what I have to say may take some time. Moreover, I wish to speak as your friend, as well as your employer. You must come to my house. I can promise," said M. Meudon with some irritation, "that you shall not see either my sister or my daughter, if it is they whom you wish to avoid."

Gaspard bowed, and promised to come;

but he did not contradict the accusation conveyed in his master's last words.

When he appeared that evening he was shown into the little room, opening from the dining-room, which Monsieur Meudon called his cabinet. His host soon joined him, and plunged at once into business.

"I have lately had an interview with your mother," he began. "She is desirous of seeing you settled in life, and therefore proposes, under certain conditions, to buy you a share in my business. I know the talent and energy you possess, and will be well pleased to have you as a partner. I suppose I may assume that you are equally ready to join me."

Gaspard hesitated.

"No prospect could please me better if I remain in le Havre," he said, "but there are reasons, not connected with business, which may make it advisable for me to live elsewhere."

The elder man shook his head.

"Be wise, my friend. Do not let anything interfere with business. I take an interest in you, Gaspard, and I have pleased myself by picturing for you a career similar to my own. As you know, I became partner to Monsieur Perrier, who had the business before me; then I married Mademoiselle Perrier, his only child, and thus inherited the other half of the business when her father died."

"The latter part of your career it is, as, perhaps, you know, monsieur, impossible for me to copy."

"Indeed! If it were suggested to you that you might marry my daughter you would refuse her hand?"

"I must do so," said Gaspard, gravely.

Monsieur Meudon frowned, but good-humouredly.

"What! is my poor Sophie not fair enough for you, Gaspard? Her dowry should be sufficient for any one who is not too avaricious."

"Mademoiselle Sophie is altogether charming. She would be a prize for any man if she had no dowry at all; but I am not free to marry."

Monsieur Meudon had meant to ignore the existence of Thora altogether; but Gaspard's straightforwardness balked him.

"I will not pretend to be ignorant of your meaning," he said, with some signs of irritation; "but I ask you to think again before you give up the opportunity of establishing yourself in a wise and reputable manner. You are entangled with a pretty and uneducated woman—most young men

are at some period of their lives, and we older folks who have lived long, and outlived much, regard such a folly as an episode which in no way interferes with the principal narrative of a career. It comes, has a brief feverish life, and goes, leaving as little mark as most childish ailments. But your liaison, Gaspard, has, if I am rightly informed, less of happiness in it than most; assuredly you do not look more cheerful since you entered into it. Your breaking with '*la belle sauvage*' is only a question of time, and of a very short space of time; but, meanwhile my Sophie may be married to another, and your opportunity for gaining a useful connection gone for ever. I do not say that you will not then obtain a wife as good as my daughter—I am a loving father, but not a blindly fond one—but she is the child of the chief of your firm, a marriage with her at once gives you a satisfactory place in society, and ensures your future income, and on it, I may tell you without breaking confidence, depends your mother's fulfilment of her intention of buying you a share in my business. She and I are agreed as to the course of action we should pursue, and it is with her knowledge and approval that I speak to you to-day. Now, Gaspard, make your choice. On one side lies a passion for an unworthy woman, which is sure to die soon, if it be not already dead, and which involves the loss of all that men as they grow older esteem most highly; on the other comfort, affluence, the embraces of your mother and sister, and the love of one who will not believe that you possess any of the faults of common humanity. Gaspard, can you hesitate for a moment?"

"Monsieur," replied Gaspard, "I have listened to you patiently, because I know that your intentions towards me are of the most friendly nature: that you seek what you consider my good, and because from you I hear the wishes of my mother expressed more clearly than she has uttered them to me. I have listened to the end, and in reply I say that you must not again, in my hearing, speak of my wife as an unworthy woman. My patience might fail me then."

"Your wife, your wife! Let us admit that, as you say, some form of marriage passed between you and this girl—whether legal or not in her country I do not care to enquire; it is immaterial. The point of importance is that here, in France—in the country of which you are a native, and in

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which you propose to live—it is not valid, and never will be, for I know Madame Harache's determination too well to imagine that she will ever yield to your wishes. You may call this Thora your wife in the sight of heaven—a favourite phrase with fanciful and self-willed individuals. But do not seek to make society accept her as your wife; that is defiance, and while it does not make her ruin the less certain, it involves you in it as well."

Gaspard's patience gave way. "Is this your creed?" he cried; "that one may reasonably harm others and escape punishment oneself; that it is permissible to take a woman's heart, play with it for awhile, then cast her out, shamed and wronged, to despair and hopeless ruin, and take, oneself, an honourable place in the world's esteem? You call yourself a man of honour, monsieur; you would strike any one who denied you such a title, yet you have no higher law of honour than the Code Napoleon, no surer test of honour than the approval of society. To every man who possesses a conscience there is a law, unwritten but not less binding, that forbids him to purchase his own comfort at the expense of another's."

The elder man shrugged his shoulders.

"I have a conscience," he said, "which at present has done me the service of bringing down on me your insults, because I would not let a man whom I esteemed, ruin himself without one word of warning. For the rest, I submit to laws which I had no hand in making for the same reason that I wear warm clothing in winter: because experience has shown me that to do otherwise involves discomfort. I offer you the result of my experience to save you from future discomfort, and in return you insult me as if I were a criminal, for whom the galleys would be too good. Very well. I should have remembered a man in love is mad, and that reason is wasted on him."

"This is no question of love, monsieur, but of something higher—more binding than any attachment of the senses. Did I love Thora Sweynson as passionately as man ever loved woman, I might yet take your advice, and desert her when passion reached satiety; but under the law which rules me, I am not free to wrong her, though I had ceased to love her—though I had even come to hate her. She gave herself to me in all innocence, in all honour, regarding herself as my wife; I

might have acted more wisely both for her and myself, had I, who knew the laws of France, refused to accept her; but having done so, but one course is possible to me—to give her a lifetime of unswerving fidelity, and to protect her as much as possible from the consequences of my selfish rashness. To you, then, monsieur, my answer is that I am compelled to decline the hand of Mademoiselle Meudon; not because I regard her otherwise than with the deepest admiration and esteem, but because I hold myself, in truth and honour, already married. To my mother, whose ambassador you are, say that the first benefit I can accept at her hands, is her recognition of my wife. After that, I will take any gift she offers; without that, I will receive nothing, and will hold myself free from any tie of duty or affection towards her. Dear as my mother and sisters are to me, my wife, by the very helplessness and ignorance on which you dilate, by the determination you all show to withhold that title from her, has the stronger claim on my love, and on such protection as I still can offer."

"On my word, young man, you speak as if it were a question of your being the giver rather than the receiver of favours!" exclaimed Monsieur Meudon, disgusted at the result of an interposition on the success of which he had too securely counted.

"In this I am the donor," answered Gaspard. "I offer my mother the opportunity of doing an act of justice; you, the honour of persuading her to it. If you both refuse, my only course is to resign my present situation and go to England, or Scotland, or any country where my marriage will not be disputed."

"And in reply," cried Monsieur Meudon, furiously, "I tell you that I shall persuade your mother to do nothing except incarcerate you in an asylum for idiots. You are the greatest fool I ever met! Go; it is painful to a sane man to have to talk to you."

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